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604, West Chester, Chester Co., Pa. June 1912

Poetry

A RISING TIDE.

The west wind clears the morning,
The sea shines silver grey;
The night was long, but fresh and strong,
Awaits the breezy day.
Like smoke that flies across the life,
The clouds are faint and far;
And near and far, the bar,
The tide comes creeping in.
The dreams of midnight showed me
A life of loneliness,
A story here, that knew no more
The bright wave's soft caress;
The morning broke, the vision fled—
With dawn new hopes begin;
The light is sweet, and at my feet
The tide comes rolling in.

A CHILD'S PRAYER.

By Alpine lake, 'neath shady rock,
The herd boy met beside his flock,
And softly told, with pious air,
His alphabet as evening prayer.
Unseen, his pastor lingered near:
"My child, what means the sound 'A'?"
"May I not in the worship share,
And raise to Heaven my evening prayer?"
"Where'er the hills and valleys bend,
The sounds of prayer and praise ascend,
My child, a prayer your cannot be;
You've only said your 'A B C.'"
"I have no better way to pray;
All that I know to God I say,
I tell the letters on my knees;
He makes the words Himself to please."
—From the German.

To I could pass as swiftly as a thought
The leagues that lie between us to-night;
And come beside you in the lamp's clear light,
As weary with the work the hours have brought.
You rest beside the hearth; if I could stand
And lean on the broad elbow of your chair,
And pass my fingers through the clustering hair
And take into my own the bread of life,
And whisper softly in your ear,
Some phrase to us, to us only known;
And take my place as if it were my own,
For ever—would you bid me welcome, dear?
—All the Year Round.

Miscellaneous.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

CHAPTER I.

To those guests who were in the secret, Mrs. Featherstone's dinner-party on May 8, 1885, was a matter of no small amusement and interest; while even to those who were mere outsiders, and unacquainted with more than the superficial aspects of society, the occasion was no ordinary one. Leonard Dalzell was to be present after more than a year's absence from London, and was to introduce his wife—a bride of two months' standing—to that small portion of his friends who were dining with Mrs. Featherstone. Those who were not behind the scenes were yet a little excited at the prospect of meeting a man whose history of Italian literature had, by a rare combination of beauty of style and depth of learning, managed both to captivate the general public and satisfy the learned critics, while the presence of this bride lent a certain air of romance to the successful author's reappearance. But to the initiated the occasion was rendered doubly piquant by the presence of a lady whom surely no one but Mrs. Featherstone would have asked to meet the bride couple. Sydonie Marvel, who was sitting so quietly and composedly in the arm-chair, talking with Sir Joseph Towers, had been as every one knew, engaged for some months to Leonard Dalzell. Every one knew this fact—that is, every one who knew anything, among whom must not be included the hostess, who was only conscious of extreme delight at having secured two such eminent personages for one dinner-party.

More than one pair of eyes glanced furtively, none the less curiously, at Sydonie as the Dalzells were announced, but without result, for she went on unconcernedly in her talk with Sir Joseph, and only looked up when Leonard Dalzell made his way to her side.

She put out her hand cordially and spoke with a certain suppressed enthusiasm which marked her more emotional utterances.

"I am so glad to see you in England again, and to tell you in person how much I have rejoiced in your success."
He bowed gravely in answer; his tongue was not so ready as hers, and besides she had been expecting and preparing for his arrival during the whole time that she had been listening to Sir Joseph's commonplace, while he had not more than a moment in which to compose himself to meet her.

Perhaps she guessed what kept him silent, for she went on, changing her tone to one of delightfully easy friendship:
"I hope you are going to stay, now that you are back in England. You have been very much missed. I must own that I could not bear to hear of your going away again."

Sir Joseph, overhearing the friendly, almost affectionate, tone of the little speech, thought to himself how absurd people were in talking as if these two had ever been engaged. Why, it was obvious that Miss Marvel cared nothing for Dalzell—possibly was the impression Miss Marvel intended to create.

It was a strange experience for Leonard to feel her hand once more upon his arm as they went down to dinner together—still stranger to look down the staircase to the large hall across which Mr. Featherstone was leading the bride in her trailing white gown. The situation was one which, a year ago, he would have declared to be a hideous impossibility, but which now seemed bearable and even enjoyable. What words of passionate love, of angry reproaches, had passed between him and

this woman, who was nothing to him now but a chance acquaintance!
"You were so quick to congratulate me that I am obliged to appear as a mere copyist," he said, as soon as they were seated; "but I incur the risk in order to tell you that I have seen and that I appreciate Psyche."

"She is well hung, is she not?" asked his companion with a pleased smile; "but tell me, did she satisfy you?"
Her voice was eager with anticipation; perhaps he felt a certain delight in answering her in a half-jesting way.

"Do your own ideas ever satisfy other people?" he asked.

"Ah!" she sighed. "Don't wander off into general statements! I am as vain and egotistical as of old. I want you to talk about my picture, not about pictures in the abstract."

Something in her appeal touched a chord in his memory, and he dropped his half-bantering tone, and spoke to her in a simple, straight-forward way.

"Well, if I am to find fault with Psyche, it is the old fault that you try to show too much. Everything in your words has some hidden meaning—you can't paint a butterfly on a rose, and be content with the effect of beauty you have created. You must paint them to represent some allegory—every flower and every insect under your hands becomes a vehicle for a sermon. You ride the nineteenth century hobby-horse of symbolism too hard. Take care you do not ride it to death."

Miss Marvel listened very patiently to his criticism, and seemed to consider carefully what he had said.

"It is Swedenborg, is it not," she asked at length, "who declares that the world is built by correspondences, and that all outward things are but types of spiritual ones?"

"I have no doubt that he has maintained that or a similar absurdity," Leonard made answer dryly; "and you had best beware, Sydonie, or your passion for mysticism will land you in Swedenborgianism—or whatever may be its modern substitute."

The name once so familiar and so dear had slipped involuntarily from his lips. At the sound she looked up at him quickly with a pair of gray eyes thrilling with meaning, but she dropped them again before he had finished speaking, and when she answered him, her long black lashes lay upon her pale cheeks.

"I forgive you this time, but never speak to me again like that."

Her tones lingered upon the word "never" with warning emphasis. Mrs. Browning speaks of an "apocalyptic never," and Leonard, recalling the phrase, felt that there might be cases in which the expression was not overstrained. He had time to consider its meaning and application, for Miss Marvel did not speak to him during dinner.

In the drawing-room afterward one or two of the ladies were amused to watch Miss Marvel's introduction of herself to Mrs. Leonard Dalzell, and to compare the two women as they sat talking together. Sydonie managed the whole business, as she did everything which fell to her lot, with perfect self-possession and grace, and without any betrayal of a consciousness that she was observed—a fact of which she was, however, fully aware.

"I do not know if your husband has mentioned my name to you as that of an old friend, Mrs. Dalzell," she said, holding out her hand to the bride. "I have known him for a great many years, but it is quite possible that he has never had time to tell you of all his former acquaintances, so I must introduce myself—I am Sydonie Marvel."

Her name created less effect than she expected. The young bride rose and took her hand shyly, and rather awkwardly. "I don't think I have ever heard it," she made answer, evidently divided between truth and courtesy. "But I am very glad to know you."

"There is a foolish belief," said Sydonie, gathering courage from the other's evident ignorance and embarrassment, "that wives invariably dislike and distrust their husbands' old friends. I always deny the truth of those general statements, and I am sure they do not apply in your case."

Beatrice Dalzell said that she hoped not, and then relapsed into silence. She had been brought up in a happy but conventional home, where society talk was limited to certain safe subjects, and where a discussion of general principles would have been considered as being in very bad taste—almost as much as a discussion on religion or politics.

Miss Marvel at once understood her companion's state of mind, and altered her tone as she sat down by her side on the low sofa.

"I think you met Mr. Dalzell abroad last year, was it in Switzerland?"
"No; we were both in the Black Forest—at a little village where there was some very good fishing, which both my uncle and Mr. Dalzell enjoyed."

"Oh, he was always a devoted fisherman; and you—did you fish?"
Beatrice smiled, showing a row of teeth as white and regular as her companion's. She was as much amused as a child who is startled at the notion that you do not know his nurse's name, or some other fact of supreme importance to himself.

"No, I don't fish, but Allison and I used to work and read together. Allison is my sister."

"You are lucky to have a sister," sighed Miss Marvel; she felt sure that now she had found the note to which this quiet commonplace nature would vibrate, and she was a little startled when Beatrice bluntly asked:

"Have not you one?"

"Oh yes; but we are separated by many, many miles of sea and land."

Beatrice's face softened into sympathy; she had never dreamt that there could be a division between sisters, wider than the widest continent, deeper than the deepest sea, and Sydonie was not inclined to explain. She went on with her interrogatory conversation, which she had her own reason for pursuing.

"I hope you enjoyed the Black Forest; did you stay there long?"

"We left on September 17th—just after

we were engaged," Mrs. Dalzell replied, with a certain pride in her engagement. "Ah, the country must have been looking beautiful then," and Sydonie made a rapid calculation. Her letter of September 18th must have reached Leonard while he was smiling from the effect of it—or rather when he was crushed by the suddenness and bitterness of the blow—that he had run into this engagement. Sydonie felt that her heart grew warmer to her rival.

When the men came up near the dining-room, Leonard paused near the door to look at the two women in conversation with one another. They formed a pretty picture as the light fell upon their graceful figures. No one would have denied the beauty of the younger lady. Beatrice could count at least ten years fewer than Sydonie; her features were more regular, her cheeks more rounded, her color brighter; but the elder woman had a grace of expression always changing, a look of fragile delicacy, and an exquisitely formed hand and arm, which gave her considerable advantage over her companion.

She was not dressed in white, as she generally loved to be—Leonard noticed this with surprise—but in some soft, clinging, black material, relieved here and there with bunches of exquisite half-blown, pale-pink roses, one or two of which had dropped their petals upon her dark drapery. He had never seen her look so strangely charming before. What a contrast she was to the stiff figure beside her, in its fashionably trimmed skirts and its unrelieved white!

Sydonie had carefully studied her dress for that evening, having avoided the usual whiteness of her attire from a desire to escape comparison with a younger and fairer rival, who would have eclipsed her brilliant charms. But whatever her motive, she had succeeded to perfection—in one man's eyes at least.

"I have been talking to your wife," she said in a low tone, when he came up to her side; "I must tell you how much I like her. We shall see a great deal of one another, I hope."

"I hope so too. It will be a great gratification to me to feel that you are friends." "And in turn will you do something for me? Will you let me feel that we are friends again, as we used to be a few years ago?"

Her voice sank lower as she spoke, but he heard her words and realized her meaning. There had been in their acquaintance a short space of time when they had not been lovers, and she meant that they were to return to those days, before the madness of passion had disturbed a friendship neither too cordial nor too exacting. She was honest in what she asked, and he was honest in his promise that they should be friends—with an emphasis upon the word—as of old. But there is such a thing as willful blindness, even where the blindness really shuts out all objects but one.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. and Mrs. Mill were really very well satisfied with their niece's match, when Beatrice had told her aunt, in a breathless hurry, that Mr. Dalzell had really—and then paused for words. It was not a bad marriage for a girl with Beatrice's small fortune, and, besides, Leonard was sure to make his way in the world. As for the girl herself, she had never thought for her worldly position or her wealth; she only knew that he was a great writer, and one of the best and noblest men that ever lived.

"Do you think you can love me, Beatrice?" he asked gently, with a tender look on his expressive face; and his angry, bitter spirit had found consolation in her answer.

He did not pretend to himself that he loved her, but he meant to love her; this quiet, gentle, pretty creature, whose unfailing tenderness was a contrast to the varying moods of the woman who had jilted him, and upon whom he had sworn to revenge himself.

His motives do not seem admirable when set down in black and white, but we may be sure that they were of a very different complexion when seen through the atmosphere of his own mind. Beatrice loved him, and he meant to marry her and make her happy. She should never have a wish ungratified that he could fulfil; it would be an easy task to satisfy the claims of so simple and unassuming a nature. During his brief engagement to Sydonie he had claimed, if not every hour of his time, at all events an account of how every hour was spent. She had been jealous of his friends, his pursuits, his very work, while Beatrice, in her northern home, was satisfied with a short weekly letter and the outline of his doings.

He realized the vast difference between the passionate love of a woman of genius and the girlish attachment of commonplace nature, and congratulated himself on the fact that Beatrice could neither give nor claim the deeper feelings of an intense emotion. From all of which it may be concluded that Mr. Dalzell, although a man of considerable literary power and increasing literary reputation, was not deeply in the secrets of the human heart, or fully capable of discriminating between the closely allied effects of love and vanity.

The inevitable result which follows all selfish acts dogged Leonard's married life. He was disappointed in its effects upon his happiness and peace of mind, and as these were all that he had considered in the step he had taken, it is obvious that the matter was a failure. He was too generous to accuse his wife of anything but a passive share in the disaster, and he was genuinely glad that she showed herself so contented and comfortable in circumstances which became every day more and more wearisome to him.

"Does not Mrs. Dalzell find the time at Henderson hang very heavily on her hand?" asked Sydonie of him one day, as he was lounging on a divan in her studio, watching her painting.

He had fallen back to his old friendly habit of looking in at all hours of the day, to criticise her work and advise her as to its progress.

"Mrs. Dalzell," he replied with cheerful carelessness, "is occupied with her household affairs. There is not a single duty that she ever leaves undone, and

these occupy her from morning till evening."

Sydonie was satisfied with his reply. It reduced her rival to dimensions of a comfortably commonplace sort, while seeming to acknowledge her merits.

Beatrice and she had interchanged calls, but there was little to produce intimacy or even friendship between them; as Sydonie put it, there was no rapprochement; different tastes, different interests, different habits, formed a wide gulf, which there was no keen desire on either side to bridge over, nor was Leonard desirous of promoting a friendship which might involve painful complications both for him and his wife, who could only suffer at any explanation of the former relations between him and Miss Marvel.

Meantime he saw Sydonie often; he came to London every day to his club or to the British Museum, as Beatrice quite understood, and as was the case—only his club was within a half-hour's walk of Sydonie's studio, and many of the hours he spent in the reading-room of the Museum were employed in looking out some detail of architecture of costume for his artist friend, to whom he must then pay a hurried visit for the purpose of explaining the result of his researches. To both of them these meetings became the most important part of the day; now that he was married he felt that he was incurring no risk either for her or for himself, and she fully enjoyed that liberty of action which the last quarter of the nineteenth century has allowed freely to women with a career.

There was piquancy given to Leonard's visits by the very fact that they were unknown or unwelcome to his wife, and Sydonie could not resist the triumph of finding herself, at thirty, more seductive than a rival ten years her junior. As to Beatrice, she would as soon have suspected her husband of smothering her in his sleep, or stealing and pawning her few jewels as of paying too much attention to another woman. If she sometimes felt that married life was wanting in that perfection of confidence of which she had dreamed, she sternly repressed the thought, declaring to herself that any failure must be the result of her own want of power to understand her husband's wider views and aims.

When he stayed away late into the night she would never own even to herself that the hours were long and lonely, and she always met him with a smile of welcome which might well have won his heart if he had not grown to consider it mechanical—a word he was fond of applying mentally to her actions. She was very busy during his absence; she spent long hours in her little garden, which bloomed like a small Eden under her efforts; she paid and received the numerous duties which were expected of her, and she learned to know some of her poorer neighbors intimately. She was not a clever or a cultivated woman, but she was never an idle one.

One confession which she had made shortly after her marriage had at first annoyed her husband. She owned to him that she positively disliked music—a fact sufficiently lamentable in itself, as proving her deficiency of intellectual sympathy, but one which became doubly pitiable when openly avowed, as proving her absolute ignorance of what the world expects from this wife of such a man as Dalzell.

He grew, however, to regard her weakness more complacently as the summer rolled by, and he would leave her to go to the opera or some of the concerts in which he passionately delighted. "Shall you go alone?" she asked sometimes with the fearlessness of absolute confidence. "I am afraid you will find it dull."

"I am going to meet Mrs. Marshall and her cousin," he would reply carelessly, without explaining that her cousin was Sydonie Marvel.

The inevitable result was delayed by the general rush from London in the month of August, but the delay did nothing to open Leonard's eyes to the peril of his position; it only proved to him how absolutely necessary Sydonie's sympathy and Sydonie's society were to his life.

He rushed back to London on some frivolous pretext, and then hurried to Devonshire, where he had heard she was sketching. He would only stay a day with her before he returned to the north; all the vague jealousies and uncertainties which had haunted him before having become living realities since he had seen Bowles, the landscape painter, in constant and welcome attendance upon her and her cousin. His jealousy was irritated and kept alive by his consciousness that he had absolutely no right to the feeling, which yet served to bring Sydonie perpetually to his mind.

When he met her in October he was indignant because she spoke enthusiastically of the holiday. She enjoyed the tribute involved in the dark looks and deprecating words with which he answered her outbursts of delight about Devonshire and its beauties, but as the time went on, she began to be alarmed at the evident strength of his feelings and decided to bring matter to a crisis. She was wanting neither in sense nor generosity, although her vanity had for a time prevented her from deriving any benefit from either quality, and she was resolved to bring to an end a complication which threatened to become painful and compromising. The conclusion was not, however, exactly according to her programme. It was one November evening, as they were chatting together, that she suddenly rose and said to him, without any warning:

"Now, Mr. Dalzell, you are to go, if you please. I never get any work done while you are here, and besides—"

"So you are going to send me away again? You did it once before—do you remember? Have we not both had cause to regret that the process must be repeated?"

She did not answer; her face turned whiter than its wont, and her hands trembled a little.

"Sydonie," he went on, forgetful of everything but the woman before him, "you know you loved me then—you know you love me now—just as I have never loved, and never shall love, any woman but you."

The silence which fell upon them was very hard to break. If life be regarded as a drama, there are moments when the actors must long for a curtain to fall and bring their scene to a creditable close. Both the man and woman felt that credit far from them as they stood together in that accusing silence.

"Go," she said at last, "go at once! I will write to you to-morrow."

He obeyed her, and went into the darkness.

It was the next evening when he was at dinner with his wife that the letter was handed to him, but it was not till Beatrice had been long in bed and asleep that he opened it as he sat by the fire in his study. What he had hoped or feared he hardly knew, but the letter was one to quicken his sense of shame and his desire for better things:

"I might dare much to remain your friend," wrote Sydonie—"the slander of the world and even my own accusing conscience, would bear both one and the other if I felt that I made your life a brighter and happier one by allowing you to come and see me—by giving you that sympathy and help which you seem to need so sorely. But there are other considerations which must outweigh even my yearning to fulfill in part all that I once hoped to be to you. In this unhappy affair of your marriage there is only one really innocent actor, I, by my impulsive letter, by your equally impulsive engagement, have both deserved to suffer—although not so deeply as we suffer now—because we have both been guilty of something which to reproach herself. The more I am convinced of the truth of your statement that you do not love her, the more I have loved her—and I do believe absolutely and more urgently do I feel that we both owe her a terrible debt, and that we must spare her at any cost of additional suffering to ourselves. For that reason I bid you go away for a time, and keep away from me until you feel that you can look upon me as what I am and always shall be till death—your friend."

As he finished the letter he groaned aloud. Every word he read seemed to prove the worth of the woman he had lost, and to show the generosity and beauty of her soul. It never occurred to him that the very opportunity for generosity may be a proof that its finer forms are lacking, or that one woman could wish for no sweeter vengeance upon another than thus to plead her successful rival's claim to pity and forbearance.

CHAPTER III.

When Leonard stated his suddenly formed determination of a solitary three weeks' walking tour in Yorkshire, he was careful to suggest to his wife that she should have her sister with her for a few days, as he was afraid she might be lonely; but she answered him with a smile:

"Oh, no! I have plenty to do, Leonard. I shall be all right, but I am afraid you will find it very dull."

She knew little of the companion which tramped by her husband's side along the sea-cliffs and across the dreary Yorkshire moors. A man must, when he finds himself alone with nature, think out those personal problems he has been shirking or avoiding; and Leonard, at the end of his three weeks' tour, was healthier in mind and body than he had been before. He wrote two or three times to his wife, but he was careful to give her no address where she could communicate with him—she was resolute in his determination to be alone.

When at the beginning of December he left himself into his little hall in the early twilight, his heart was full of the many hours of suffering and endurance which yet lay before him, but he did not shrink from the future, for he was conscious of a certain subdued pleasure in the struggle, and, besides, he was resolved that nothing should separate him finally and entirely from Sydonie.

He opened the drawing door gently and looked in; the fire was low in the grate, and for the moment he was unable to distinguish his wife; then he saw her leaning back in her armchair, her feet on her lap, her head thrown back, and her eyes closed. Something in her attitude was unfamiliar to him, and he said gently in a startled voice:

"Beatrice!"
She woke suddenly with a sound between a sob and a scream, and then sat upright without speaking.

"Beatrice, dear, have I startled you?" She rose to her feet as she answered him:

"Oh, no, no. Is it you, Leonard—have you come back? Are you better for your trip?"

Was it only the surprise that made her voice so unfamiliar to her husband? "Beatrice, what is wrong?" he asked as he took her hand in his. It burned his fingers as it lay there passively.

"Nothing, Leonard, nothing. You would like some tea, would you not?" As she spoke she moved toward the bell, but before she reached it she swayed and fell to the ground, Leonard was not in time to catch her, but he knelt in an agony of terror beside the prostrate and motionless figure. How the servants and the doctor came he never knew, but he suddenly was aware that the room was brilliantly lighted, and that busy hands were bringing Beatrice back to life.

"A touch of low fever, caught in some of her visits to the cottages," was the doctor's verdict next morning. "Mrs. Dalzell is so young and strong that the matter is not likely to be a serious one."

But as the days went on his tone altered; he had never seen so little power of rallying in any young patient; there seemed to have been some terrible shock to the nervous system—could Mr. Dalzell give him any information?

With a sinking heart Mr. Dalzell made his inquiries of the servants, who were, however, not able to give him any intelligible answer, but the fact that ever since his departure Mrs. Dalzell had complained of terrible neuralgia—had eaten little or nothing, and had spent whole hours of the night pacing up and down the room—"to quiet the pain, sir, as she said," the respectable middle-aged housemaid had added with tears in her eyes; "although it stood to reason she couldn't get better so long as she didn't eat or sleep, and kept taking those long walks, and she would go out every day, walking from her boots, must have walked miles."

Leonard's conscience left him no peace.

He sought anxiously for some token of that which he dreaded to discover. He questioned the servants as to his wife's visitors and the letters she had received—the doctor's inquiry justified him in making the closest inquiry—but he was unsuccessful in his work, although he gave up to it every moment he could spare from the sick-room. He was a most tender, watchful nurse, and doctor Giles was almost justified in his remark to his wife that Leonard was the best husband he had ever seen, and that he only hoped that Mrs. Dalzell had appreciated him. For Beatrice showed but little consciousness of his presence, sometimes smiling faintly, when he spoke to her, but generally lying in a stupor, watching the leafless vine branches which beat against her window-pane.

She was a most obedient patient, never complaining, always ready to carry out the wishes of those about her—only she would not speak. It seemed as if speech was an effort beyond her powers.

"Beatrice, dear," asked her husband one day as he sat by her side, "has anything happened to alarm or grieve you while I was away?"

She shook her head, nor could his searching inquiries win from her any word or sign but that.

At last he could bear no longer his own agony of doubt. He decided to discover the truth. Kneeling by her side where he could see her colorless face and closed eyes, he asked her (so cruel may a man become under the consciousness of his own misdeeds):

"Beatrice, you seem very lonely and dull with no one but me. Would you like some one to sit with you? Shall I ask Sydonie Marvel to come?"

His dry lips would hardly form the name, but its utterance did not affect that impassive face for a moment.

Beatrice gently shook her head, and then said, after a pause:

"I should like to have Allison."

Leonard was deeply thankful for the calmness which exorcised his haunting dread, and felt, too, with a little throb of self-justification, that the only wish his wife had expressed was one in relation to her sister, not to himself.

Allison came, and Beatrice was contented; but her content did not show itself in words, only the smile came a little oftener to her lips. She spoke once:

"Love me always, Ally dear—even afterward."

And this was the only consciousness she showed of the swiftly approaching end, which those around her expected day by day. Once, indeed, Allison heard her murmur, "It is better so—it is better so," but when she bent closer over her sister, Beatrice opened her eyes, and looking at her, said distinctly, "Always be good to Leonard, Allison, for he has been good to me," as if she feared that the murmured words might have done him wrong.

This protest was the last her faithful heart brought to her trembling lips. In a few more days the sisters were separated by a veil that Allison could not pierce.

"You must comfort yourself, Leonard, by feeling that you had made her happy," sobbed Allison through her tears, "and remember it was the last thing she said to me."

And so strange a contradiction is human nature that the very fact which ought to have been the sharpest sting to his grief was, in fact, a consolation to him.

He turned his back at once upon England and his past. He did not even attempt to see Sydonie, for the dead Beatrice was a restraint upon him which the living wife had never been. Only he wrote a few lines, and posted them on the day he started for Marseilles. The contents were simply these lines:

"I am leaving home for a year. In twelve months I shall return."

CHAPTER IV.

The conventional year of mourning was nearly over, and Mr. Dalzell was back in England. His first visit was to Sydonie, and that over he returned to his own home, which he had left on that walking tour just twelve months before, under the shadow of hopeless and desperate love. As he paced up and down his study, there were no thoughts of his dead wife in his heart. His whole being was occupied with Sydonie. He still felt the clasp of her hand in his; her eyes still looked into his; her words still lingered in his ears.

I tell you I paced up and down, this garret crowded with 'e's best crown, and fastened with love's perfect feast."

He began quoting the words almost unconsciously, and then broke short with a happy laugh.

"My Sydonie! So for from killing 'body and soul, and hope and fame,' you will help me to the perfection of it all—my dear, dear love!"

He was too much agitated to write or read to-night. He would look over her letters—those which had lain untouched since he had received and shut away her last words, bidding him forget his love for her. With a happy smile at the contrast between now and then, he unlocked his writing table drawer, and opened it.

But his mood suddenly changed, for the letters, instead of lying in an orderly heap, were loosened from their band, and were scattered about the drawer. One lay open as if it had been thrown down half read. With the terrible wave from a rushing tide which will ultimately swallow up and destroy him he rang the bell. The housemaid who answered it was startled at his look, and still more at the imperious manner with which he pointed to the drawer.

"Who has touched this during my absence! The papers have been disturbed."

"No one has been near it, sir. I have never left the house—nor, not for an hour—since you went away."

"Some one must have touched it, I tell you."

The maid looked puzzled; then her brow cleared.

"Oh, sir—yes. I beg your pardon; it was Mrs. Dalzell. One day while you were away she said she was going to put your papers tidy for you, and I saw her begin at that table."

"It could not have been so," he said, struggling with his deadly sense of certainty "the drawers were locked."

"She said one of her keys opened it, and I daresay she forgot to put the things tidy, as she was taken ill just afterward."

He signed her to leave him—he knew she spoke the truth—there was no need for him to search for the little bunch Beatrice had carried about with her so much housewifely pride; no need to fumble of her keys and turn it in the lock; he

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